

## **Spatial Concepts in the Pre-modern Ottoman Empire**

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This paper conceptualizes the terms and concepts explaining space (mekan) in the early-modern Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans used several words for mekan, each corresponding to a particular spatial scale and imagined differently depending on individual perceptions. The focus will be on how spatial concepts were shaped by the perceptions of the pre-modern people and how these people pinpoint spatial belongings and identities based prominently on primary sources like judicial court records, chronicles, and mensur hikaye written in the Ottoman early-modern period. The importance of using primary sources for research is that they directly provide spatial descriptions from state and individual perspectives. A study of spatial concepts enables us to the concept of remoteness in the Ottoman Empire, and to discuss how people's spatial perceptions differed from those of the state's official lexicon.

In particular, the concept of diyar, which refers to a medium-scaled space in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire but also refers to a larger space when it is used outside the borders of the Ottoman Empire, and the related concepts of diyar-ı aher (other lands) and diyar-ı Acem (places outside the borders of Ottoman Empire referred as acem, then referred as Persia) will be discussed. Other concepts, such as vatan (birthplace, the innermost scale) and memleket (country), will also be explained in order to understand how the concept of diyar encompasses a spatial scale for people. By analyzing from the innermost spatial scale to the outermost, it will be discussed to comprehend how identities were formed in the early-modern period. I argue that diyar as a concept, was crucial in showing the spatial distinctions and the imaginations of individuals, such as distance, proximity, foreignness, and unknowingness.